



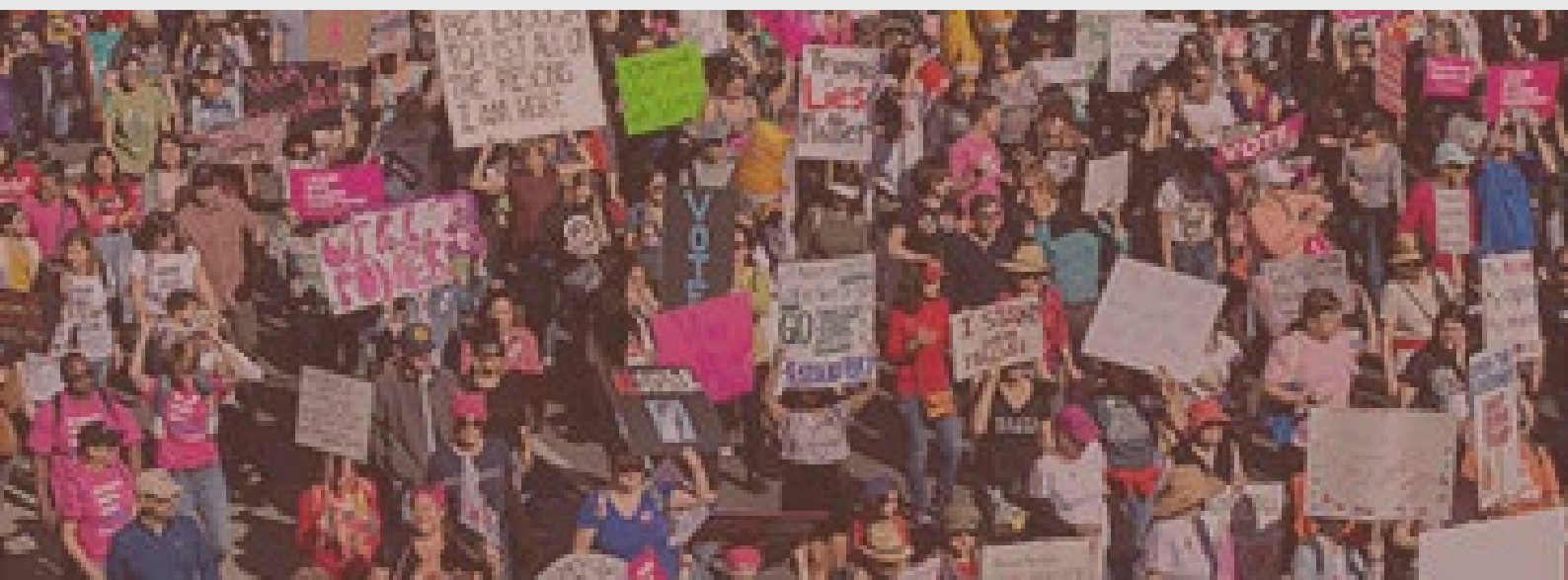
Gender and Geopolitics **OBSERVATORY**

« PEACE IS AN ONGOING AND CONSTANTLY EVOLVING PROCESS »

Interview realised by Marie-Cécile Naves, Senior Research Fellow at IRIS, with

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THE BOOK



FEMINIST PEACE RESEARCH AN INTRODUCTION

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by Élise Féron, Tarja Väyrynen

GENDER AND GEOPOLITICS OBSERVATORY PRESENTATION

Directed by **Marie-Cécile Naves**, Senior Research Fellow at IRIS, the Gender and Geopolitics Observatory aims to be a forum for reflection and the promotion of inter- and multi-disciplinary research on the way in which gender, as a concept, a field of research and a tool for analysing reality, can be mobilised to understand geopolitics and be a decision-making tool on international issues.

Issues relating to women's rights, LGBTI rights, sexual and gender-based violence, the body, sexuality, gender relations, human rights, femininity and masculinity all over the world concern a growing number of decision-makers and players. Addressing geopolitics through a gender lens also means innovating in the way we deal with issues considered to be more 'traditional' on the international agenda (climate, education, development, health, sport, violence, military, labour, etc.).

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New technologies: what has Feminist Peace Research (FPR) brought to light through a gendered approach to military technologies? (AI, drones, etc.)

Historically, science and technology, and especially war technology, have been associated with men and masculinity. Women and gender and sexual minorities are largely absent from accounts of technology development, although, in practice, women have been involved early on in the development of important technologies such as computers. This can be explained notably by the fact that the values at the core of Western science and technology, such as objectivity and control, are associated with masculinity.

Over the past decades, feminist scholarship has highlighted that gender and gender relations are embedded in the military technologies themselves, in terms of who controls and uses these technologies and how gender values and roles influence their development. For instance, feminist scholars have shown that for drone operators, gender constitutes one of the main variables used to identify potential targets in so-called conflict areas, using the usual associations between, on the one hand, men-combatants-guilty and, on the other hand, women-civilians-innocent. FPR also underscores how the use of military drones leads to the dehumanisation of the victims and to a technology-induced distance between drone operators and those they target.

Similarly, FPR sheds light on the potentially negative effects of the use of AI, such as the reproduction of patterns of inequality and discrimination, for instance through the exclusion of women and Indigenous knowledge. There are numerous and well-documented examples of predictive algorithms displaying racial bias (e.g. failing to identify people of colour) or perpetuating harmful gender stereotypes, notably towards gender and sexual minorities.

Feminist researchers also draw our attention towards the existence of a deeply gendered and class-related 'digital divide' which prevents equal access to, understanding, and use of these AI-enhanced technologies. Individuals belonging to marginalised and vulnerable groups, in particular women and girls, racialised, older and poor people, as well as people living in rural environments, are less likely to understand and therefore respond to these technologies.

How do feminist approaches help to renew the understanding of genocides, notably when sexual violence fulfils a genocidal function?

For a long time, scholars have hesitated to study potential gender-based differences between victims in annihilation projects which target whole ethnic, national, racial or religious groups. Despite such reluctance, scholarship on the experiences of female victims and survivors of

genocide has gradually developed, opening up avenues for a broader ‘gender analysis’ of genocides.

These studies have shown that not only have women never been spared by genocidal politics but also have often been victims of different forms of genocidal violence, and more so than other genders. While the idea that women would be more victimised than men during genocides has been refuted, feminist scholarship has demonstrated that women were often targeted during genocides because of their role as biological and cultural reproducers of the attacked ethnic, national or religious group. For instance, rape works as an effective genocidal strategy when raped women are cast out or considered unworthy mothers by their own group – meaning that they won’t bear children for that group. Women have also been victims of genocidal policies targeting their sexual and reproductive health such as eugenic practices of forced abortion and forced sterilisation.

Another notion that has been discussed by feminist scholars is the concept of ‘gendercide’, which refers to the deliberate extermination of individuals of a particular sex or gender within a specific cultural group. The notion of gendercide has raised attention to the fact that in many cases of genocide, such as in Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Rwanda and the Holocaust, men, and in particular civilian men, have been the primary targets of genocidal policies.

‘Everyday peace’: how key is this ground-breaking concept for catching how boundaries between ‘war’ and ‘peace’ in the traditional meaning are (perhaps more than ever before) irrelevant?

The concept of everyday peace captures the fact that even in the context of war and violence there are mundane practices that create and maintain peaceful relationships. Peace can manifest itself, for instance, in the form of empathy, care and solidarity amid war. Consequently, feminist peace scholars prefer to describe peace as an ongoing and constantly evolving process, not merely a singular event. This perspective simultaneously acknowledges the myriad forms of structural violence, stigmatisation and marginalisation – often with gendered dimensions – that are prevalent in societies perceived as peaceful.

Furthermore, in feminist peace research, the gendered dynamics of everyday peace practices evoke the pertinent question of peace agency, particularly its visibility and invisibility. Feminist peace research wants to ask ‘who are peace actors’ and ‘where are the spaces and locations of peacemaking’. In this way, feminist peace research examines also the peace practices that might be invisible and spaces that are not traditionally thought to be relevant for peace.

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